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A Brief Note on the Tholaka Inscription

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A pedestal inscription commemorating the donation of a Buddha image was published as inscription no. 31A in “*Die Palola Sāhis*” in 2004¹ on the basis of a plate published in the journal Orientations in February 1997. Last year, Richard Salomon, University of Washington in Seattle, most kindly provided me with a much better picture of the inscription, which guarantees that the inscription is complete and not continued on the sides of the pedestal, and, moreover, allows for some improvements in reading and understanding this text (Fig. 1):

1. # deyadharma^{mo} yam spālapati *tholakabhāryāratnāyāsārca(m)*ti tathā sā
2. rdham mātā padmasukhā puttra āmudasim̄gha punyasigha khukhethāla parama
3. kalyāṇamitra⁺narendratrāta yad attra punyam tad bhavatu sarvvasatvānām :
4. vimuktattrāta :

Improved upon readings are marked by italics. First, it is very clear from the new photo that the name of the general (*spālapati*) is Tholaka, not “Dholaka,” because a stroke inside the wrongly presumed character *dho-* is clearly visible now. Also clearly readable is *bhāryāratnāyā*. It is however, impossible to decide whether or not *tholaka-bhāryā-ratnāyā* is one compound with a genitive ending meaning “of Ratnā, the wife of Tholaka.” For, in the subsequent text depending on *sārdham* no other name shows any sign of a case ending. Consequently, it is equally possible, if not even preferable to separate *tholaka bhāryā ratnā* followed by an obscure sequence of characters *yāsārca(m)ti* “the general Tholaka (and) the wife Ratnā” with *yāsārcamti* standing unexplained. Moreover, it is not at all certain that the character *rcaṁ* is read correctly. It is, however, likely, because the similar characters *rdha* and *rvva* both occur in the inscription in shapes clearly different. A character *rca* of almost the same shape, on the other hand, is attested in the word *arcām* found in the pedestal inscription of Nandivikramādityanandi year 91 (*Palola Sāhis*, no. 16). Therefore, two interpretations are possible, either “This is the pious gift by the wife Ratnā (Yāsārca(m)ti?) of the general Tholaka together with ...” or, alternatively “ ... of the general Tholaka (and) his wife Ratnā (Yāsārca(m)ti?) together with...”

¹ O. v. Hinüber: *Die Palola Sāhis. Ihre Steininschriften, Inschriften auf Bronzen, Handschriftenkolophone und Schutzzauber. (Antiquities of Northern Pakistan 5)*. Mainz 2004.

Most interesting was the discovery of a small cross, which is written above line three after the word *kalyāñamitra* and indicating that a word was left out by the engraver by mistake². This is of course the name added in line four. The correct text therefore is *paramakalyāñamitra vimuktattrāta narendratrāta*. The earlier proposal (*Palola Śāhis*, p. 66) that Vimuktattrāta could have been the author of the text is thus proven wrong. The similarity of the names Vimuktattrāta and Narendratrāta suggest that they were either brothers or perhaps fellow monks of the same *nikāya*³.

There are, consequently, two *kalyāñamitras* mentioned in this inscription. It should be recalled that even three *kalyāñamitras* assist the donors of the royal donation of a Buddha by the Palola Śāhi Jayamañgalavikramādityanandi and his queen Śāmāvatī (*Palola Śāhis*, no. 12).

The reading of the name of the mother is confirmed as *padmasukhā* by the new photo, which, at the same time, is a warning to resist the temptation to correct the word to *padmamukhā*.

Palaeographically the different shapes of the character *gha* in Āmudasimgha and Puṇyasigha are noteworthy.

² On corrections in inscriptions cf. Richard Salomon: *Indian Epigraphy*. Oxford 1998, p. 68 and Katrin Einecke: "Korrektur, Differenzierung und Abkürzung in indischen Inschriften und Handschriften". *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* Band 68. Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 233, 323 on the small cross, which is often easily overlooked, cf. *IIJ* 47, 2004, p. 316 note 25.

³ Names ending in *-trāta* are not among the names used by certain schools as communicated by W. Wassiljew: *Der Buddhismus, seine Dogmen, Geschichte und Literatur*. St. Petersburg 1860, p. 294 foll., cf. also A. Hilka: *Die altindischen Personennamen*. Breslau 1910, p. 146 quoting Wassiljew.